

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A packaging assembly for holding a product, the assembly comprising:

at least one longitudinal support post, each post having a top end and a bottom end and at least one integrally formed locking tab ~~tabs~~ disposed at the bottom end; and

a unitary base having openings disposed therein, the openings being configured to receive the bottom ends of the support posts 16 in interlocking fashion;

wherein the base and the support post cooperate to prevent the support post from moving laterally.

2. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the base is rectangular and has four corners and an outer perimeter, the openings being disposed at the corners.

3. (original) The assembly of claim 2 wherein each support post is formed from a sheet of paper wound into a tubular structure comprising an outer wall and an inner, product-facing wall substantially coextensive with the outer wall and joined to the outer wall at outer ends to define a hollow space therebetween.

4. (original) The assembly of claim 3 wherein each support post outer wall comprises two outer wall members joined at a right angle along an outer edge, each outer wall member extends from the outer edge to one of the outer ends, the inner wall comprises two inner wall members joined at a right angle along an inner corner, each inner wall member extends from the inner corner to one of the outer ends, and the outer and inner walls form the locking tabs at the outer ends.

5. (original) The assembly of claim 4 wherein each locking tab is substantially planar and is formed from adjacent portions of the outer wall and the inner wall.

6. (original) The assembly of claim 5 wherein the two locking tabs are oriented on non-parallel planes.
7. (original) The packaging system of claim 6 wherein the locking tabs are spaced inwardly from the outer perimeter of the base and wherein portions of the base abut each outer wall member.
8. (original) The assembly of claim 7 further comprising a top cap wherein the support posts extend from the base to the top cap and fit within the top cap.
9. (original) The assembly of claim 8 further comprising transparent film wrapped around the support posts.
10. (original) The assembly of claim 8 further comprising a transparent film placed over the product between the product and the support posts.
11. (original) The assembly of claim 7 wherein the base is water-resistant.
12. (original) The assembly of claim 11 wherein the base is made from expanded polystyrene.
13. (original) The assembly of claim 12 wherein the support posts are made from paper.
14. (currently amended) A packaging assembly for holding a product, the assembly comprising:
 - at least one longitudinal support post, each post having a top end and a bottom end and an integrally formed locking portion disposed at the bottom end; and
 - a unitary base having openings disposed therein, the openings being configured to receive the bottom ends of the support posts in interlocking fashion;
 - wherein the base and the support post cooperate to prevent the support post from

moving laterally.

15. (original) The assembly of claim 14 wherein the base is rectangular and has four corners and an outer perimeter, the openings being disposed at the corners.

16. (original) The assembly of claim 15 wherein each support post is formed from a sheet of paper wound into a tubular structure comprising an outer wall and an inner, product-facing wall substantially coextensive with the outer wall and joined to the outer wall at outer ends to define at least one hollow space therebetween.

17. (original) The assembly of claim 16 wherein each support post outer wall comprises two outer wall members joined at a right angle along an outer edge, each outer wall member extends from the outer edge to one of the outer ends, and the outer and inner walls form the locking portion at one of the outer ends.

18. (original) The assembly of claim 17 wherein the locking portion is polygonal.

19. (original) The assembly of claim 18 wherein the locking portion is spaced inwardly from the outer perimeter of the base and wherein portions of the base abut the outer wall.

20. (original) The assembly of claim 19 further comprising a top cap and wherein the support posts extend from the base to the top cap and fit within the top cap.

21. (original) The assembly of claim 20 further comprising transparent film wrapped around the support posts.

22. (original) The assembly of claim 20 further comprising a transparent film placed over the product between the product and the support posts.

23. (original) The assembly of claim 19 wherein the base is water-resistant.

24. (original) The assembly of claim 23 wherein the base is made from expanded

polystyrene.

25. (original) The assembly of claim 24 wherein the support posts are made from paper.

26. (original) The assembly of claim 19 wherein the outer wall comprises an inwardly directed bead having an apex in close proximity with or adjacent the inner wall, the bead dividing the corner post into a longitudinal, tubular, hollow subsection and the locking portion.

27. (original) The assembly of claim 26 wherein the locking portion is fully enclosed.

28. (original) The assembly of claim 26 wherein the locking portion is partially enclosed.

29. (cancelled) A packaging assembly for holding a product, the assembly comprising:

at least one longitudinal support post, each post having a top end and a bottom end and an integrally formed locking tabs disposed at the bottom end; and

a base having at least one opening disposed therein, the opening being configured to receive the bottom end of the support post in interlocking fashion.

30. (cancelled) The assembly of claim 29 wherein the locking tab is substantially L-shaped.

31. (cancelled) The assembly of claim 30 wherein the base is made from expanded polystyrene and the corner post is formed from a sheet of wound laminated paper.